1763

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The Nature, Guilt and Consequences of Murmuring.

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694. h. 11/13

A

CHARGE

Delivered at the

WINTER VISITATION

Held for the

ARCHDEACONRY OF *WELLS*

IN THE

COUNTY OF *SOMERSET.*

By FRANCIS POTTER, A.M.
Archdeacon of *Wells.*

OXFORD,
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS. MDCCLXIII.
Sold by DANIEL PRINCE; and by JOHN RIVINGTON in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard, *London.*

BRITISH MUSEUM

My Reverend Brethren!

WHEN Dangers threaten, or Good may be done to the Community, it is the Duty of every *Member* of it to give it all the Aſſiſtance in his Power. The *open* Attempts of late made to *poiſon* the Nation, and diſturb the *public* Peace, call for *Exertions* of this Kind. You will pardon it then, if the Time allotted for the preſent Addreſs be ſpent in gathering up *the Seeds of Sedition* ſown amongſt us; in order to point out and obviate the *Miſchiefs*, which, if permitted to *ſtrike root* in the Minds of the People, they might poſſibly produce.

NOT to be off our Guard at ſuch *Conjunctures* it may be of uſe to acquaint ourſelves — with the Nature and Guilt of *Murmuring*, and — with the *Inconveniences* into which it may draw us.

TO *murmur* in this Senſe is to be diſcontented under, arraign, and ſpeak evil of the Conduct, and Management of our *Governors*. There are in all *political* Bodies, like vicious

Humors in the Body *natural*, that are ever upon the fret and the Ferment, enflaming the Temper and deſtroying the Health of the *Conſtitution*; yet the firſt and loudeſt to complain of Grievances, when they are themſelves the greateſt, and perhaps the *only* Grievances. As if a *Fever* ſhould complain of the intollerable Heat of the Body, to which ſhe is confined: or an *Ague* murmur at the violent Extremes of Heat and Cold ſhe is hurried into, and grow diſſatisfied with her Habitation, as inſecure and in Danger, by Reaſon of the Shocks it undergoeth, which ſeem to threaten a Diſſolution.

Of this Sort of Men; ſome are equally averſe to *all* Government: true natural *Sons of Belial*, who will brook no Controll. In whoſe Eyes the moſt mild and equitable *Laws* are Encroachments on *natural* Right, and none *free* but Savages. To hinder them from deſtroying each other, and embroiling the Happineſs of Mankind, is Oppreſſion, an Infringement of the *Charter* of Nature, and a Violence to *Free-will*. Their Prerogative is to do what they *dare*: to be abſolutely independent and accountable to no One. Their Thoughts are *free*, and who ſhall controll them? Their *Tongues* are [a] *their own*; *and who is Lord over them?* Even the Law of *Liberty* with them is *Slavery*; they will not be bound, tho' in the *Bond of Peace*.

a Pſalm 12. 4.

Others

OTHERS there are, who perhaps have better Notions of Government in *general*, but are diſſatisfied with the particular *Form* of it, under which they live. If it would pleaſe to diſſolve itſelf, and give them an Opportunity to *new-model* it after their *own* plan and humor, they may poſſibly be reconciled. But if *Rulers* will be ſtiff and perſiſt fixt to the preſent Settlement of it (as indeed they muſt, unleſs they will hazard the conſequent Diſorders, which, Reaſon and Experience aſſure us, would more than probably enſue, if once the Ballance of a Conſtitution be broken) they muſt be contented to be branded as Strangers to the true *Spirit of Liberty*.

OTHERS again may have a tolerable Liking to an Eſtabliſhment, and can bear with the *Inconveniences*, ſo they may but reap the *Advantages* of it. They delight to baſk in the Sunſhine and batten on the Favours of it; and are contented, whilſt they engroſs its Emoluments, and enjoy its Smiles without a Rival. But no ſooner doth a Frown appear in the Face of *Majeſty*, however unavoidably, than the adored Beauty vaniſheth entirely. If a Cloud but intervene, an eternal Night is hard at Hand, and they are about to be incloſed in *Ægyptian* Darkneſs: like *thirſty* Wheels they grate and heat for Want of *Oil*—"It is inſufferable "for Perſons of ſo much *Merit* to be diſregarded, and al-"moſt inconſiſtent with Juſtice or Gratitude!"

FROM

FROM theſe and ſuch like Fountains of Diſcontent are continually bubbling *the Waters of Strife*, which murmur as they flow. Hence the Ear is perpetually deafened with Complaints; Ruin and Diſtreſs dreſſed up in a *thouſand* various Forms, and repreſented as juſt at Hand to ſcare the unthinking, and even amuſe the ſerious. Hence the Blindneſs and Blunders of the Adminiſtration are lamented in *doleful* Accents, and *Elegies* compoſed on the public Happineſs. Hence the Conduct of the *Miniſtry* is ſcan'd, and cenſured without Mercy or Remorſe; and Characters the *moſt ſacred* handled not with the *Familiarity* of an Equal, but with the *Authority* of a Judge. Hence too *invidious* Compariſons are drawn from *former* Ages to illuſtrate the Badneſs of the *preſent*; and *prophetic* Schemes laid down of how Things *might* have been, had *other* Meaſures been taken.—Such are the charitable Labors of theſe *choice* Spirits, which they freely and liberally beſtow for the Repoſe of the *public*, the Peace and Benefit of their Country!—How far we are chargeable with a ſimilar Behaviour *Facts* and our Conſciences will tell us.

IT hath pleaſed *God* to bleſs us with *a Prince*, whoſe Diſpoſition and Virtues have juſtly made him the *Delight* and the *Pride* of his People. Who, when he aſcended the Throne of his Anceſtors, found them harraſſed and well-nigh worn

worn out by a bloody and expenſive War; and even in a full Tide of military Succeſſes barely not ſinking under the Weight of it. Farther Victories ſoon attended his Arms; and, to crown all, *Peace his Councils*: from both he hath drawn Glory to himſelf, and conſiderable Advantage to his Subjects. For which have they been duly thankful? or do they entertain a juſt Senſe of theſe Things? Complaints in War-time are no great Wonder: it is an Evil, to which nothing but Neceſſity can reconcile us, and muſt be alway burthenſome and deſtructive tho' conducted with the utmoſt Integrity and Abilities. But to find the ſame in Time of Peace, and perhaps louder, is indeed ſurpriſing. If we have a proper Senſe of theſe Bleſſings, if we have ſacrificed our Diſcontents (and we can hardly make a more grateful Offering) *what mean the Bleatings* and uproar *which we hear?* why have Objections been ſought? Fears and Jealouſies infuſed? and all this Murmuring and Clamor made on the Occaſion? why meet we with ſo many, who, [a] *when we ſpeak to them of Peace*, ſeem to *make* themſelves *ready to battle?* The Outcry of the *Jews* in order to bring our Redeemer to the Croſs was, [b] *the* Romans *will come and take away our place and nation:* when that very Fact was the Cauſe of bringing that ſad Calamity upon them. And *God* grant our tempting him by a groundleſs Diſtruſt and Inſenſibility of his Providences do not provoke him to forſake us!

a Pſalm 120. 6. b St. John 11. 48.

and

and our Ingratitude to the *beſt of Kings*, in Conjunction with our other *national* Vices, too ſoon deprive us of ſo great a Bleſſing! It is by no means the leaſt *crying* Sin of this Generation; tho' being ſheltered under the ſpecious Cloak of *Liberty*, and of *Love* to our Country, it is too ſeldom reproved or acknowledged.

But the Guilt of any Crime is beſt diſcovered in the *Cauſes* and *Object* of it. The Cauſes of this are *Pride* and *Coveteouſneſs*. How productive *theſe Vices* have ever been of Diſcontent, and into what Enormities and Broils they have compelled Mankind, it would be mere loſs of Time to ſet forth. Every Man of common Experience in the World knoweth, that of them come [a] *Strife and Envyings*; whoſe are *Confuſion and every evil Work*.

A Spirit derived from ſuch a *Parentage* muſt be bad. To eſtimate the *Degree* of Guilt it carrieth in it, we muſt conſider its *Object*; which is *God*. So *Moſes* on a like Occaſion recriminates on the *Iſraelites* — [b] *Your Murmurings are not againſt us, but againſt the Lord*. Altho' they may ſeem to be levelled only at *Man*, they paſs thro' him to *God*. All Sin indeed is committed againſt *God*: This in a more immediate Manner. For all Government being from him, and *Rulers* no other than his *Miniſters*, an Affront and In-

a St. Jam. 3. 16. b Exod. 16. 8.

jury

jury offered them, rebound on him they repreſent. Nor is it an Offence merely againſt his Ordinance or Inſtitution; but, the Adminiſtration of all Things depending upon him, the Juſtice and Wiſdom alſo of his *Providence* are in ſome Sort arraigned as often as we murmur: a due Senſe of whoſe *Superintendency* alone can unite and influence the Intereſts and Paſſions of Men, and make the *Good* of all the *Aim* of all.

It muſt be acknowledged indeed that it is not impoſſible for *Governors* to err; and that it is the undeniable Privilege and Birthright of a *Free-People* to give their Opinion on all Points of abſolute and *national* Importance. But the more intereſting the Point in Debate is, the greater ſhould the Prudence and Temper be, with which it is debated. Arguments ſupported by Reaſon and urged candidly are beſt heard, and bid faireſt to be regarded. Raſhly to put a Nation in a Ferment, and by *Libels* and Invectives call in the *Multitude*, to be violent about Things they do not underſtand, is an Evil, which muſt be *dreadful* and may be *fatal*. For by Methods like theſe even *great* and *good* Men may become Objects of *popular* Odium; whereby they will be robbed of the Credit and Protection of their own Virtues, and their Country of the Benefit of them. Nor are Demands of *Liberty* in the Height of Enjoyment of it, or complaints of Grievances when there are none to provoke to them, to ſeek

Redreſs,

Redreſs, but *Occaſion* of them; and muſt do unknown Harm, tho' it could be admitted that no Harm might be intended.

But have we indeed ſome Complaints? we ſhall not for that Reaſon *clogg* the Wheels of Government, and hope to take ſhelter in *Confuſion*. A *vicious* Zeal, tho' in a *good* Cauſe, too *often* produceth very untoward Effects; and an Oppoſition to it, when carried on with a Warmth which affects the *public* Peace, will at *all* Times make a *bad* One worſe. Good Men and *Lovers of their Country* never looſe Sight of that truly *Patriot* Axiom, that *public Order is public Happineſs, and the Want of it Miſery*; and will rather foregoe what they moſt deſire for the *Common Good*, than riſque the compaſſing it by Means ſo impious and *unconſtitutional*.

For are *Tumults* and *Outrage* the proper Expreſſions of *Gratitude* to *God* for paſt, or of *Dependance* on him for future Bleſſings? or will they ſtrengthen the Hands of our *Governors*, under whoſe Management we enjoy them? Far from it. Exceſſes of this Nature *diſtemper* Government, *corrupt* the People, and *offend God*. They [a] *ſeperate between* him and them: they *rob* them even of each others Aſſiſtance by ſetting them at a *Diſtance* from one another. They are therefore at all Times *dangerous*; and according to *our*

a Iſai. 59. 2.

Lord's

Lord's Aphoriſm, if perſiſted in, muſt at ſome Time or other bring the whole to [a] *Deſolation.*

In our Caſe at preſent *inteſtine* Jealouſies and Feuds, the Spawn of *Party*-Malice and Diſappointments, will blaſt the bleſſed Fruits, which *Peace* would bring to Maturity; and in the End prove equally, if not more detrimental to the common Wealth than even *foreign War*. So much at leaſt we all feel and know. We all know too, that a ſhort Suppreſſion of this *bad Spirit*, under *God*, procured for us thoſe *Victories*, which reduced our Enemies to Reaſon. To it therefore, or the Harmony produced by it, we ſtand indebted for every Opportunity we have had [b] *to ſing of Mercy* as well as *Judgments*. It is the known Language of the *Schools* "remove the Cauſe, and the Effect ceaſeth." The Bleſſings then obtained *for* us by *Union*, by *Union* only can be ſecured *to* us. What Infatuation therefore to fall out amongſt ourſelves about the Terms of Agreement with our Enemies? merely becauſe Exceptions have been taken at *the Hands* thro' which they have paſſed! or at beſt, becauſe the Enemy hath not been ſufficiently *ſqueezed* to ſatiate the ſordid Appetites of thoſe, who *compaſs Sea and Land for* Gain! when at the ſame Time it is acknowledged on all Hands, that had their high Demands been inſiſted on, no Terms of Accommodation could have been liſtened to, and the *War* muſt have gone on: in which even a Continuation

a St. Matth. 22. 25. b Pſalm 101. 1.

of *military* Succeſſes (tho' that is very uncertain) as it muſt be attended with the ſame annual Expence of Blood and Treaſure over again, muſt, tho' gradually, have *effectually* undone us. Nor could we reaſonably hope that [a] *the God* and Lover of *Peace* would vouchſafe a Bleſſing on the Arms of a *People* who had *voluntarily* enliſted themſelves into the Number of thoſe Diſturbers and Scourges of Mankind, who [b] *delight in War*.

If then to run down a *Meaſure* ſo agreeable to Religion and good Policy: to treat the Authors and Approvers of it from the *Higheſt* to the loweſt with all the perſonal Slander and Calumny, that Wit and Acrimony can invent; contrary to all Law and Equity: and to make the *Love* of our Country the Pretence for ſetting it in *a flame* be not [c] *to uſe Liberty as a Cloak for Maliciouſneſs*, it will be difficult to ſay what is.

It is therefore much to be wiſhed for their own Sake, as well as that of the Community, that they, who indulge a *Spirit* of this Malignity would conſider the Conſequences of it.

In the *Iſraelitiſh* Murmurers it was eſteemed ſo wicked, that [d] *the Earth* was commanded *to open her Mouth* at once to confute and conſume them. [e] *Theſe Things* an Apoſtle aſſures us *happened to them for Enſamples, and they are written for our Admonition.* It is probable indeed Providence

a Phil. 4. 9. b Pſalm 68. 3. c 1 Pet. 2. 6. d Numb. 16. 31, 32, 33. e) r. 10. 11.

may

may not make all *Murmurers* ſuch immediate Monuments of Vengeance: but there is no Security. The Sin of Murmuring, tho' it ſhould not penally, doth *naturally* tend to Deſtruction, being an inferior Sort of, and uſually a Leader to *Rebellion*. To murmur is to riſe up in Thought and Word againſt thoſe, with whom we are diſſatisfied: and when once the Minds of the People are *heated* and *inflamed*, their Affections *alienated* from their Governors, and their *Confidence* in them and in each other loſt; it will be difficult to foreſee when they will *cool* again: poſſibly not till *Diſcord* hath brought forth her *perfect Work*.

Of this the Riſe and Progreſs of the *Great Rebellion* in theſe Kingdoms, and the compleat Miſery conſequent upon it are Evidences. Yet, bad as they were and infamous, it is but Juſtice to obſerve that the *Murmurers*, even of *thoſe* Times, were far from equalling *ours* in perſonal Satire and rude Behaviour to their *Sovereign*, till that reſtleſs *Spirit*, by puſhing them on from one Pitch of Wickedneſs after another, had familiariſed them to Principles and Practices, which neceſſarily *tend* to, and at that Time *ended* in Confuſion. As ſad and dear-bought Experience then hath taught us that Ruin is the natural Brood of every [a] *Fibre of this Root of Bitterneſs*, *God* grant it may ſo affect and influence us, that we may never have any, but *paſt* Experiences of it!

a Heb. 12. 5.

But

But if *Murmurers* ſhould eſcape temporal Puniſhment, everlaſting Deſtruction is not the leſs certain for being unſeen, or lighter becauſe at a Diſtance: and will be the Portion of the diſobedient and *ſeditious*. No one can be ignorant that *Unity*, *Peace*, and *Love* are the great Doctrines of the *Goſpel*: nor that *Variance*, *Strife*, and *Sedition* are the Works of the *Devil*. They therefore who imitate him the firſt and greateſt *Murmurer*, muſt without Amendment expect their *Portion with him and his Angels*.

Let us then, *my Countrymen*, be timely perſuaded to live in all due Subjection to our *lawful* Governors; and be contented in the Station wherein *God* hath placed us! Let us remember that we are *Subjects*, whoſe Buſineſs it is to ſubmit, not dictate to, cenſure, or uſurp, Authority! Let us conſider that we are *Chriſtians*, and that to be a good *Subject* is a *neceſſary* Part of the Character of a good *Chriſtian*. That Subtraction of the Obedience in Degree or Kind, due to the *higher Powers* by the *eſtabliſhed Laws* of it in any Conſtitution, (the Meaſure and Specification of it in all) is a direct *Forfeiture* of this Character, and ſubjecteth alſo the Delinquent to great and endleſs Puniſhment. For [a] *the Powers that be*, confirmed and made efficacious by his Authority become the *Ordinances of* God: to which *every Soul* is bound to be *ſubject*, not merely on Account of the Penal-

a Rom. 13. 1, 2, 5.

ties,

ties, to which he may otherwiſe be liable, *for Wrath only*; *but* alſo for *Conſcience Sake*, or out of a Senſe of the Duty he owes to *God*. In a Word — Let us be diligent and induſtrious in our reſpective Callings, have it ever on our Minds that *private* Reformation belongs to Individuals, *public* to Governors. Do all we can for the Good and Order of the Common-wealth; but leave the Government and Direction of it to *God* and our *Superiors*: at all Times beſeeching the *Author of Peace and Lover of Concord* to incline the Hearts of all to [a] *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*.

And all this, on Pain of forfeiting — what all affect and few underſtand — the Character of *Patriots*. For when we recollect that in a *civil* Capacity, or as Members of the Community, a firm Adherence to theſe Rules *only* will entitle us to the *divine* Protection; we muſt be convinced, that the beſt *Teſtimony* we can give of our Regard and *Love* to our Country will be to encourage *Religion* and thoſe Virtues which are moſt likely to produce this good Effect; and to diſcountenance *Irreligion* and Vice (as Peſts to Society and the Bane of that *Self-Government*. which is the Source and Security of all *public* and *private* Happineſs) in all Orders, and Ranks of Men indiſcriminately. And was Integrity of Life and Principles the only Recommendative to Favour and Reſpect; and Diſgrace and Contempt the ſure Wages of the *Libertine* in either, a Spirit of *national* Virtue might revive

a Eph. 4. 3.

amongſt

amongſt us: true *Patriotiſm* and Greatneſs of Soul lift up their dejected Heads: the *Great* ſignalize themſelves for the *common* Good: *Sobriety*, *Induſtry* and *good Order* ſpread amongſt the *Populace*; and every Man in his Station become in ſome Meaſure both a Support and Ornament to his Country.

WHICH, hardened tho' it be and of ſet Countenance, might put *Malice* itſelf to the Bluſh. Every Man muſt be aſhamed, were good Manners and a conſiſtent Behaviour thus generally brought into Repute, to be *ſingular* in *Licentiouſneſs*. Whence the few Examples now left amongſt us, which are truly worthy of Imitation, would daily increaſe in Number: for even yet, bleſſed be God! our own Knowledge can furniſh us with Inſtances of Perſons eminent both for *ſuperior* Station and Virtue: to whoſe Prudence and good Management (and for whoſe Sake poſſibly) we may be indebted for the Enjoyment of thoſe Bleſſings, which have ſo lately [a] *put a new Song into our Mouths, even a Thankſgiving unto our God.*

a Pfalm 40. 3.

FINIS.